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EDITORIAL

Students of the history of education have no difficulty in tracing many practices still common in our schools and colleges back to the later Renaissance or even to the Middle Ages, when there was some reason for them. Prominent among these practices is the joyous custom of college "lecturing" and its equally joyous progeny, the high-school "recitation." In the one case the learned doctor behind the desk poses as the infallible authority, and out of his inexhaustible "reservoirs of scholarship" pours out facts which the pupils could very frequently get more comfortably and effectively in the library next door, whence the doctor has just obtained them. In the other case it is the single textbook in the hands of the pupil which is relied upon for the facts. The lesson is assigned by pages, the pupil reads and seeks to remember, and the teacher, as grand inquisitor, proceeds at class time to elicit "recitations" of the text by means of a series of questions directed to the memory.

The picture is not heartening but it is far more true to the actual conditions than one would think who has not investigated. And it persists because there are no adequate tests of the results. Having been educated mainly by his experiences in the home and in the community, the graduate succeeds in business or in a profession, and loyally, in some instances, attributes his success to his school and college "training." Intramural tests are applied, truly, but they are verbal, of a piece with the learning which has been doled out, and the victims, by judicious cramming, are able to store up enough raw material with which to meet the ordeal. Little of this material is retained afterward, but of course the minds of the students have been "disciplined"—in the methods of passing examinations. How unfortunate that there should be little or no use for these methods afterward!